THE EXCELLENCY OF WISDOM,

Disclosing it self in

The Virtues of a good Life:

RECOMMENDED

To the Natives of *Warwick-shire*,

IN A

SERMON

PREACHED

To them on their *Anniversary Feast-Day*, in *London*, *Nov.* 30. 1675.

By *THOMAS WILLIS*, D.D. Vicar of *Kingston* upon *Thames*, and one of His *MAJESTIES* Chaplains in Ordinary.

Who is a wise man, and endued with Knowledge amongst you? Let him shew out of a good Conversation his Works, with Meekness of Wisdom. Jam. 3. 13.

Τῷ ὄντι ἡ ἀκροτάτη σοφία ἐδὲν ἡ ὀρθὴ περὶ τῆς Θεοῦ διάληψις, καὶ ἡ θεοτάτη ἐνεργήμη, ἀρίστη πρᾶξις. Isid. Pelus. l. 4. Ep. 174.

LONDON,

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Concio hæc (cui titulus, *The Excellency of Wisdom.*)

Ex Ædibus *Lambethanis*, Decemb. 7. 1675.

Reverendmo Dno Archiepiscopo Cant. à Sacris Domesticis

Geo. Hooper.

ERRATA.

PAge 4. *line* 3. for the, *read*, your Endeavours. *p.* 8. *l.* 10. *for* men, *r.* man *p.* 11. *l.* 24. *r.* Usefulness. *p.* 19. *Marg. for* Famb. *r.* Jamb. *and for* למאורות *r.* למורות *p.* 24. *l.* 8. *for* of the, *r.* of Wisdom *p.* 31. *l. ult. for* de serve, *r.* discern.

TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE

ROBERT Lord *BROOK*,

Baron of Beauchampſcourt *in* Warwickſhire, *and Lord Lievtenant of the County of* Stafford.

My Lord,

WISDOM and VIRTUE, which oft wait at the *Gate of* HONOUR, and hardly find admittance, do here preſent themſelves before Your Lordſhip, in Hopes of that *Noble Entertainment*, which is wont to be given, by *Perſons of Honour*, to their *Neareſt Allies*. They are never repulſt by any without *Wrong* and *Diſgrace* to themſelves; nor by any entertain'd,

with a due Regard, without an Addition to their *Honour and Happineſs*. The Perſon, by whoſe Hand they are brought in this *humble Dreſs* into Your Preſence, beggs the Pardon of his Rudeneſs in this Approach, and leaving theſe *Excellencies* to Your Lordſhips Entertainment, inſtantly withdraws himſelf to his due diſtance, and waits (with *Mordecai, at the Gate*) in Hope, that having preſented theſe *Virgin-Beauties* before Your judicious Eye, they will appear ſo agreeable to Your *Noble Mind*, that they will preſently obtain that entire *Affection and Eſteem*, which will facilitate their Admiſſion into ſo *indiſſoluble an Union*, as ſhall for ever exclude the Fear or Suſpicion of a *Divorce*. And by this innocent

cent and honourable *Polygamy*, may Your Lordſhip be *Bleſſed* with a *Beautiful-Offſpring* of ſuch excellent and amiable *Virtues*, as may ſupport the *Honour of Your Name*, and be the growing *Glory of Your Houſe.*

These Excellencies, *Wiſdom and Virtue*, which I have here preſented before Your Lordſhip, are of more than *Noble Deſcent*, of Divine Original, the *Offſpring of the uncreated Goodneſs.* But I fear that (as ſometimes the *incarnate Wiſdom of God*) they find but little Regard amongſt the greater Part of the Sons of Men. And therefore that their *Reception* (particularly in our own Country, for its ſingular Honour and Advantage) may be anſwerable to their *Dignity*, I

have

have endeavour'd to unvail their excellent *Beauty*, and manifest their singular *Usefulness*, in the following Discourse; which (though its *Meanness* makes it even afraid of Appearance, yet imboldned by the Assurance of the *Goodness of the Design*, and *Seasonableness of the Endeavour*) I do here humbly offer to Your Lordships Hand.

To accept so *small a Present* from so mean a Person, will be an *Act of Humility*; to become a *Great Example* of that Excellency which is here commended to all men, will be a *singular Glory*. If the *Doctrine* delivered in this Discourse, be commended to our Countreymen, by so *Illustrious an Example*, it will certainly be more powerfully operative and influential.

So

So ſhall Your Lordſhip ſhine as a *Great Light* among many leſſer Stars: neither ſhall your brighter Glory ſuffer an *Eclipſe* in Death it ſelf, but ſhine in a higher Orb amongſt thoſe fair Lights, which adorn thoſe glorious Manſions, wherein the *Sovereign Goodneſs* reigns in eternal Glory.

May *Wiſdom* ſo conduct Your Lordſhip in all Your Affairs, and *Virtue* ſo adorn and beautify all Your Actions, that You may be the *Honour of Your Houſe, and Ornament of Your Country*; that having planted *Virtues* to a happy thriving on Earth, and gathered their pleaſant Fruits in *Praiſes and Proſperities*, you may at length be carried up in Triumph, by glorious Angels, into Heaven,

Heaven, there to be crown'd with *immortal Glories*, in the Kingdom of God. May the Splendour of Your Lordships *Virtue and Goodness* be so great, that the *Spreading Raies* thereof may cover your whole Countrey, and extend their *exhilarating Light* even to the remote Obscurities of,

My Lord,

Your Lordships most Humble,

and most Obsequious Servant,

THO. WILLIS.

TO THE
READER.

Reader,

THough the following Diſcourſe be directed to the Natives of one Country, the ſubject of it is the Great Concern of all men. All men do certainly Deſire to be Happy: but no man can poſſibly be ſo, unleſs he become truly Wiſe. Now the certain Way and Means to acquire Wiſdom, and then to improve it in the Exerciſe of Religion and Virtue, for the Attainment of true Happineſs, is preſcrib'd in the following Diſcourſe.

Man is a noble piece of active Earth, being animated with that immortal Fire, which at firſt came down from Heaven, and inſpirits him to thoſe Motions, which conduce to the Preſervation and Perfection of his Being. The Soul of man is a Spark of Heavenly Fire, which at firſt was kindled by the ‖ Breath of God, and is a Principle of thoſe Actions, whereby he diſcovers the Excellency of his Nature, and Nobleneſs of his Original. In this little Spark, incloſed by the * Hand of God, in a ‖ curious Frame, a Body fitly organiz'd for Action, there is both Light and Heat: Light for apprehenſion, and Heat for Action, God hath given to man as well an apprehenſive Minde, as an active Spirit. Hereupon, if

‖ Gen. 2. 7.

* Pſal. 119. 73.

‖ Pſal. 139. 14.

he act according to his Nature and Being, upon his Apprehension of the Excellency of things, he is earnest in the Pursuit of the most excellent Attainments. Such are those Virtues, *which are apt to adorn his Mind and Life, and tend to exalt him to a State of Honour and Happiness. This is the great Work of every man in the World. And therefore, O man, whosoever thou art, open thine Eyes, and behold the things which are excellent, and then earnestly endeavour the Acquisition of them. Amongst these* Excellent Attainments, *wouldest thou be inform'd what is most excellent, and so most worthy of thy greatest Diligence in the Pursuit? To this thou art directed in the following Discourse by an infallible Oracle, delivered in these words,* * Wisdom is the Principal thing: therefore get Wisdom, and with all thy getting get Understanding.

* Prov. 4. 7.

Wisdom is indeed the principal Excellency, *as being the most pleasant, the most profitable, and the most satisfactory of all Attainments:* Wisdom (*saith the Divine Philosopher*) will make a man prosperous and happy in all things ||. *And saith the Kingly Preacher,* Wisdom is a Defence, and Money is a Defence: but the excellency of Knowledge is, that Wisdom giveth Life to them that have it *. *'Tis Wisdom that will give you an excellency above other men, and make you no less Happy than the Angels of God.*

|| Ἡσοφία πανταχοῦ εἰτυχεῖν ποιεῖ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους. Plat. in Euthyd.

* Eccl. 7. 12.

But who knowes the Path *of Wisdom, or the* Place *of her Habitation? Though you should digg to the Centre of the Earth, or dive to the*

Bottom

Bottom of the Sea ‖, *you could not find this inestimable Treasure: though you should ascend to the Stars of Heaven, you could not reach to the* Throne of Wisdom. *Wisdom sets her Throne above the Stars, and raigns in that* Region of Light, *wherein* God himself dwells*, *But at his Appointment she descends from her high Throne, and makes the Heart of man her humble Seat. But then man must make his Approaches to God, in the Exercises of* Religion and Piety. *In these Paths you shall arrive at the* Throne of Wisdom, *and she will set upon your Head a Royal Diadem of Beauty, a resplendent* Crown of Glory.

‖ Job 28. 12, 13, 14.

* Prov. 8. 22.

Wisdom cannot possibly be separated from Piety, *and the Virtues of a* good Life. *For he that apprehends God to be the highest Being and chiefest Good, if he do not honour and obey him, that he may at length attain that Happiness, which lies in the full Fruition of him, is not wise; yea, he is guilty of the greatest Folly, in that he neglects the onely Means, by which he might attain the highest Happiness. The Sun then may as soon be disrob'd of his Beams, as Wisdom can be divested of the Raies of* Religion and Sanctity, *which crown it, in all Conditions, with a conspicuous Glory.*

Certainly, Atheism and Irreligion, Sin and Wickedness (*as I have endeavour'd, though but in few words, to evince in the following Sermon*) is the greatest Folly *in the World.* It is God that made us, and not we our selves ‖, *and* in him we live and move, and have our being *, *and yet* The Fool hath

‖ Psal. 100. 3.

* Acts 17. 28.

¶ Psal. 14. 1. hath said in his Heart, There is no God‖. *How great, how strange is this Folly!* The wrath of * Rom. 1. 18. God is reveal'd from Heaven*, *against the sins of men, in various Plagues and Punishments*; and ‖ Prov. 14. 9. *yet* Fools make a Mock at Sin‖. As a mad man, who casteth Fire-brands, Arrows and Death: *so is he who throwes out Oaths, Curses, and Blas-* * Prov. 27. 22. *phemies, and saith,* Am not I in Sport*? *These men play with Lightning, and mock the mighty Thunder, and in a proud Scorn, open their naked Breasts to the flaming Arrowes of the Almighty. They deride* Religion, *scoff at* Devotion, *laugh and jeer the Vertues of* Temperance, Sobriety, Chastity *out of Countenance. These men come forth upon the* Stage, *and so demean themselves, as if they accounted it* the highest Wisdom to act the greatest Follies, *in the sight of God, and Angels, and Men. For they stand upon their Heads and Shake their Heels against Heaven, They bear themselves upon the* Strength of their Reason *and Parts, in* the Contempt of Religion and Piety; *as if they accounted it a piece of Gallantry to dare Heaven by the Insolency of their Crimes, and to awake* ‖ 1 Pet. 3. 20. slumbring *Vengeance to their own Destruction. Now are not these men guilty of great Folly and Madness? What Folly is it in a mortal man to lift up a* Flag of Defiance *against Almighty God! Shall a poor Worm that crawls in the Dust, or Moth that frets a Garment, contend with a Man? Alas! he can instantly trample the Worm under his Feet, and crumble the Moth to Dust with his Fingers. Greater is the Disproportion which*

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a mortal man bears to the Mighty God. More easily can he turn the strongest man into Dust, and throw the stoutest Sinner into Hell. A man therefore must wash his Heart from Wickedness ‖, and his Hands in Innocency *; *he must repent of his Sins, and reform his Life, or else (though he should be admir'd by all men for the* Greatness of his Wit) *he can never attain to the least* Degree of true Wisdom. ‖ Eze. 4. 14. * Psal. 26. 6.

Thus you see Impiety is utterly inconsistent with this Divine excellency. And therefore if you do desire to become truly Wise, *you must resolve to become* really Religious. *But then when you have attain'd any Degree of Wisdom, let it be your chief Care to* retain *it, as the most excellent Possession, the richest Treasure in the World. There is a certain* *Tradition, *that* Solomon *had a Ring, which while he preserved (as* Samson *his Hair) he retain'd a singular Excellency of Wisdom above all other men. But being over amorous towards certain Women, they robb'd him at once of a double Treasure, his* Ring and Wisdom. *Wisdom is an* Excellency of the Mind: *'tis not so much darkned by any thing, as by the* Lust of the Flesh. *The Suns Glories are obscur'd by the Foggs that rise from the Earth: and the* Lights of Wisdom *are obfuscated, and at length extinguished, by an Indulgence of sensual Appetites and Inclinations. And therefore be careful (as becomes* Citizens of Heaven, *who are* Pilgrims and Strangers on Earth) to abstain from those fleshly Lusts, which war against the Soul ‖. *Do not for the base and* * *Ex Cod. Arab. Pin.*

‖ 1 Pet. 2. 11.

sordid

ſordid Pleaſure of Sin, *hazard the Loſs of that Excellency, which is your Crown and Glory. Live in the ſerious Exerciſe of* Solid Piety, *and all Chriſtian Virtues, here on Earth, and you ſhall at length be admitted to the Participation of* Everlaſting Pleaſures, *in the Preſence of God, in Heaven. That no man, who ſhall peruſe theſe Lines, may fall ſhort of this Felicity, this* Diſcourſe of Wiſdom, *as a Lamp lighted from the Sun, is here held forth by the Hand of*

London,
Dec. 7. 1675.

A Servant of Him who
is the Saviour of men,

THO. WILLIS.

THE

THE EXCELLENCY OF WISDOM, &c.

PROV. IV. 7, 8, 9.

VII. *Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get Wisdom: and with all thy getting get Understanding.*

VIII. *Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to Honour, when thou dost embrace her.*

IX. *She shall give to thine Head an Ornament of Grace: a Crown of Glory shall she deliver to thee.*

GOD is the Beginning and End of all Things. With Him (as it becomes us) we begin this Day: to Him, and to his Glory, as our ultimate End, it behoves us to direct the Actions of this Day, and of our whole Life, that in him, when Time shall be no more, we may be most Blessed for ever.

To God we owe our Being, who gave us our Birth in a good Land, and in a pleasant Place, in

in the same Country, *the Eden of England*; and thence transferr'd us, for our better Being, into the Great City of the Land, which by its sudden Rise, in so much Splendour, from its woful Ruines, is become *the Wonder of the World*. To Him give we the Glory of our Being and Brotherhood, the Praise of all the Blessings which contribute to our present Well-being, and encourage our Hopes of future Blessedness.

This is our Work, this our Duty at this Time, and your appearance (my much Honoured and Beloved Countrimen) in this Place, is a visible Pledg of your Readiness and Resolution to perform it. For that ye may *give unto God the Glory due unto his Name*, ye are this Day come unto his House, and are here ready to hearken to his *Holy Oracles*, that ye may be inform'd, what is most excellent, most acceptable to Him, and most honourable for your selves, in the Discharge of your Duty.

Many excellent things have been recommended to you by the Ministers of his Holy Mysteries upon the like Occasion, who have all design'd your Advance in Virtue, that ye might become excellent Persons, and truly Honourable in the Eye of the World, and in the sight of God himself. All that have spoken unto you in the Name of God (as those three young men, who contended for the Glory of uttering the
* Esdr. 3. wisest Sentence before *K. Darius*) have endeavoured to recommend to you that Virtue, which would render you the *Worthies* of your Countrey,

Country, the moſt accompliſht Perſons for Excellency and Goodneſs. After them all I come forth this Day, and tell your every one from the Mouth of the Lord, *Wiſdom is the principal thing; therefore*, &c. Here's,

I. *An Encomium of Wiſdom*; She is commended to us as the moſt excellent of all things; *Wiſdom is the principal thing.* Dull Mortals! Degenerate Mankind! Do men diſcern the Glitter of Gold, the ſparkling Luſtre of Gems, the Beauty and Sweetneſs of Gain, as one of the faireſt Flowers in the Worlds Garden, and can they not diſcern the *Excellency of Wiſdom*, without a Verbal Encomium? Are things brought to that paſs, that ſhe muſt bring her *Letters of Commendation* with her from Heaven, or ſhe can hardly find Entertainment amongſt men upon Earth? Muſt ſhe have her Herald go before her to prepare her Way, by proclaiming her Excellency? However now we are utterly inexcuſable if we do not give her an agreeable Entertainment, when we are inform'd of her Quality, and told ſhe is *the principal thing*, ſhe holds the Principality amongſt thoſe Virtues, that ennoble, enrich, and adorn the Mind of man.

II. *An earneſt Perſwaſion*, backt with Arguments, to endeavour the Acquiſition and Improvement of this Excellent Virtue; *Therefore get Wiſdom*; —— *Exalt her, and ſhe ſhall promote thee.* —— This is the Counſel and Advice of the Holieſt of Kings, *David*, recommended to us by the *Wiſeſt of Men*, Solomon. 'Tis to

a threefold Act; 1. to Acquire, 2. Exalt, and 3. Embrace Wisdom.

1. To be diligent in the endeavours for the Acquisition of Wisdom; *Therefore get Wisdom, and with all thy getting get Understanding*, i.e. make it thy chief Design and constant Endeavour, who pursuest any Excellency, any Advantage on Earth, to get Wisdom, as that which is most excellent and advantageous.

2. To give her the Preheminence in the Government of all the Actions of our Life. Which Advice is backt with an Argument, a Proposal and Assurance of Honour and Estimation, which shall accrue to a man thereby; *Exalt her, and she shall promote thee.* Wisdom seems to say to men, what the God of Wisdom said to *Eli*; *Them that honour me I will honour: and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed* ‖. ‖ 1 Sam. 2. 30.

3. To entertain her with the greatest Kindness, Familiarity and Endearment that may be; to take her into the Arms and Bosom-embraces of the Soul. To this, Honour and Ornament is assur'd, Glory and Renown. *She shall bring thee to Honour when thou dost embrace her. She shall give to thine Head an Ornament of Grace: a Crown of Glory shall she deliver to thee.* She shall procure to thee that Praise and Estimation, which will be to thee as a graceful Ornament, as a glorious Crown. Man is the King of all Creatures; the wise man is a King amongst men, and the Glory of Wisdom is his Crown. 'Tis Wisdom will incircle thee with bright

bright Glories on Earth, and entitle thee to Honour and Happiness in Heaven.

And now behold I have set a *noble Prize* before you, and would fain perswade you to a *generous Contest* for the Attainment of it. The Contest wherein I would engage you, is *to excell in Wisdom*: the Prize is *an Ornament of Grace, a Crown of Glory.*

To make plain the way before you, I shall

1. Enquire what Wisdom is.
2. Shew you wherein the excellency of this Acquisition lies.
3. Make it plainly appear that this excellent Endowment is attainable, and shew you by what Means.

And then I shall endeavour to perswade you every one to Diligence in the Use of the Means for the Attainment of so excellent a Virtue. All with a Design to advance you to such a Degree of Excellency and Goodness, that ye may be *the Glory of your Native Country, and the Ornament of this great City*, adding to the Splendour of its Riches and Honour, the Lustre of Wisdom and Virtue.

This is the Work which now lies before us, in the Management whereof I am oblig'd,

I. To enquire, and to give you an Accompt what Wisdom is. By the ancient Philosophers (who are follow'd by the Greek Fathers) it is thus defin'd; ‖ *Wisdom is the Knowledge of* ‖ Σοφία ἐστὶ θείων καὶ ἀνθρωπίνων πραγμάτων, καὶ τῶν τούτοις αἰτίων. *Alcin. de Dogm. Plat. Clem. Alex. Paed.* l. 2. c. 2. *Basil. Sapientia est rerum divinarum & humanarum, causarumque, quibus hæ res continentur scientia.* Cicl. 2. Offic.

the Nature and Causes, both of things Divine and Humane. Or, * *'Tis the Understanding and Knowledge of the most excellent things.* But this is but an excellent kind of Speculative *Knowledge*, which may be in the Mind of a man utterly destitute of *true Wisdom.* Wisdom is certainly *a practick Excellency*, a Virtue that directs and influences our Actions, to the Attainment of the most excellent Ends. It's as the *Light* of the Sun, which is accompanied with that *Influence* which fructifieth the Earth.

* Ἡ σοφία δὴ τῶν καὶ ἐπιστήμη τις τιμιωτάτων. Arist.

Wisdom then is an excellent, Energetical Virtue of the Mind of man, whereby, upon a clear Apprehension and a right Judgment of things, the whole Soul is carried out, in a well govern'd Order, in an earnest and constant Pursuit of the most excellent Attainments.

In this Description I have given you *the liveliest Pourtraicture* that I can of this excellent Virtue. Be pleased to peruse her several Lineaments, and while I unvail her amiable Excellencies, keep your Eyes fixt upon her Beauty, till you find her Image impresst upon your Soul.

1. She is *an excellent Virtue of the Mind of man.* Man is the noblest Creature in the Universe; the Soul is the noblest Part of man; the Understanding is the noblest Power of the Soul; and Wisdom is the noblest Virtue of that Power, the most beautiful Embellishment of the Mind of man.

Other Virtues are for the most part seated in *the Will*, and their Office is the Moderation and Govern-

Government of all the inferiour Appetites and Affections: But Wisdom has her Throne in the highest Place, is seated in the noblest Power of the Soul, the Mind or *Understanding* of man, and thence sends forth her Influence upon all the Powers and Motions of the Soul, the Actions and Interests of the whole Life. There she sits as a Queen, and is attended with an honourable *Train* of excellent Virtues. *Temperance* stands on her right Hand, and *Patience* on her left. *Fortitude, Justice, Clemency and Goodness* stand before her Face, and *Humility* sits at her feet, and when ever she stirs abroad, *Contentment* attends all her Motions. Thus she is truly honourable in her Attendants, and in all her Appearances, and makes him that entertains her honourable and happy.

She is *an Energetical Virtue*, powerfully operative. She gives not only a directive Light, but sheds forth also such a mighty Influence, as makes the Motions of the Soul and Actions of the Life agreeable. 2.

She proceeds upon a clear Apprehension and right *Judgment of things*. For *the wise mans Eyes are in his Head: but the Fool walketh in Darkness* ‖. 3. ‖ Eccl. 2. 14.

Hereby *the whole Soul is carried out, in a well govern'd Order, in an earnest and constant Pursuit of the most excellent Attainments*. There is a threefold Act of Wisdom, *viz.* 4.

1. To propose the most excellent End; as the Glory of God, and mans Good and Happiness.

2. To

2. To elect the *best Means*, which are most proper and powerfully conducible thereunto.

3. To engage the most *earnest Endeavours*, in the diligent Use of these Means, for the Attainment of this End.

And thus ye have seen what Wisdom is: Come we now to consider,

II. Wherein the Excellency of Wisdom lies. The Excellency of things adventitious to the Essence or Being of men, lies in their Usefulness, or Subserviencie to his Well-being and Blessedness. Those things which give him Support, Defence, and Lustre in the Eyes of the World, are commonly accounted excellent. Such are *Riches*, *Power and Honour*. *Riches* are a Support, *Power* a Defence, *Honour* an Ornament to men, giving a Lustre to their Persons and Actions. These, men are wont to pursue with much Earnestness, as most *excellent Attainments*, seeing they render them as *Princes amongst the Poor*, *as Gods among men*.

But now the Excellency of Wisdom, which gives it a Preheminence above all these extrinsick Accessions, lies in this, that it conduces to the Perfection of the Nature of man, advances him to a Similitude to the most high God, and leads him to the Fruition of the chiefest Good, and so gives him Possession of the highest Happiness. The most splendid things on Earth are oft-times given to those Sinners, who shall never see Gods Face in Heaven: but true Wisdom is the *Beatifick Virtue* of the Saints, which leads them, by the Actions of a good Life, to

the

the Beatifick Vision of God in Glory. Though secular Advantages then are sought for with great Earnestness, and esteem'd Excellent, *Wisdom is the principal thing*, 'tis much more excellent.

1. *Wisdom is better than Riches**. Riches are a comfortable Accessory to the Animal Life. Wisdom makes a man almost equal with Angelical Beings. Hence 'twas said of David, *My Lord the King is as an Angel of God* ‖. Now what's the Life of a Beast to the active Excellency of an Angel? Certainly a Wise man, though without Wealth, does as much excel a Rich man, without Wisdom, as an Angel does an Ass laden with Gold. Thou hast Wisdom and wantest Riches; another has Riches and wants Wisdom. Now tell me, Canst thou be content to barter Conditions with him; to part with thy Wisdom to be possest of his Wealth? No, 'tis impossible. For he is already a Fool, who can consent to such an Exchange. This must needs extort a Confession from every one of you, that Wisdom is better than Riches, which yet is the *golden Oyl*, which sets all the Wheels of Action throughout the whole World in Motion.

* Σοφία πλούτε κτῆμα τιμιώτερον. *Menand.*

‖ 2 Sam. 18. 27. & 14. 17, 20.

*There is not certainly a more noble Possession than that of Wisdom**. Riches are but an Addition to the outward Estate: Wisdom is the Ennoblement of the Mind of man. The one is but as a *Prop* set to a ruinous House: the other as a *royal Diadem* set on the Head of a Soveraign Prince. The Excellency of a thing may

* Οὐκ ἔστι σοφίας κτῆμα τιμιώτερον. *Men.*

may be estimated by the Loss or Deprivation. Now tell me, to which would ye rather consent; To have an Eye pluckt out of your Head, or to have a Skirt cut off from your Garment? Wisdom is as *the Eye of mans Soul*, whereas Riches, as *a Skirt of a Garment*, are but an Addition to his Estate, which oft-times are more a Burden than an Ornament.

Certainly the greatest Excellency and Praise of Riches is this, that they are good *Instruments of Virtue*. Their Excellency then lies in their Use, to which they neither are, nor can be apply'd without the Direction of Wisdom. Wisdom then is *the Principal thing*, to which Riches are subservient, when they become the Means of Glory to God, or Good to men. *How much better then is it to get Wisdom than Gold? and to get Understanding rather to* ‖ Pro. 16. 16. *be chosen than Silver* ‖? Yea *Wisdom* (saith *Solomon*) *is better than Rubies; and all the things* * Prov. 8. 11. *that may be desired are not to be compared to it* *. And therefore,

2. *Wisdom is to be prefer'd before Power.* Power, unless directed by Wisdom, like *the dreadful Thunder*, breaks all in pieces. As *a Sword in a mad mans Hand*, such is great Power, which not being guided by Wisdom, becomes the Instrument of Rage and Folly. Power without Wisdom, is but as *the strength of a Beast*, dangerous and destructive. Wisdom in War is more Excellent than Power and strength. *A wise man* (saith *Solomon*) *scaleth the City of the* ‖ Prov. 21. 22. *Mighty* ‖. Victory is often owing to *a wise Conduct*,

Conduct, than the bruitish strength of an ungovern'd Body of People.

Moreover, *the Power of a Prince* is his Authority for the Government of his People. This is a Splendid and Noble Thing, an Excellency worthy to be Crown'd with Honour: But yet even this must give place to Wisdom, as the greater Excellency. *Government* is properly the direction of the actions of men to excellent ends for the Publick Good. Now hereunto two things are requisite, *Right and Skill*, or an ability to do it: The former without the latter is altogether insignificant and useless; the latter (when they are conjoyn'd) is the Lustre and Glory of the former. Now the former, *Right to Govern*, is Authority; the latter, *Skill to do it well*, is Wisdom. This then being the Praise and Glory of the other, as rendring it useful for the Publick Good, which is its only Excellency, is much more Excellent. For that which makes another thing excellent, must needs be more excellent it self. If Power and Authority then do owe their Excellency and Use, fulness to Wisdom, Wisdom that applyes them to their proper ends, must needs be much more excellent. *A wise man is better than a King*, ‖ say the Hebrew Doctors; *For* (say they) *if a wise man die, there is not presently found a wise man to succeed him; but if a King die, there is not a man of Israel, but may be made a King*: Yea, they have a bolder Proverb in the praise of Wisdom, *Kings are the Judges of the Earth, but wise men are the Judges of Kings.* *

‖ חכם קודם למלך

* המלכים שופטי ארץ והחכמים שופטי מלכים

3. *Wisdom excells Honour:* Honour without Virtue is but *an empty Title*, but Wisdom is a real Excellency, a rare endowment of the Mind of Man: Where there is Virtue to support Honour, there Honour is *the lustre of Virtue:* But now Wisdom is it self a most excellent Virtue of the mind of Man; and therefore as much as the substance of Gold excells the shine, so much does Wisdom excell Honour.

Honour is but *the estimation of Excellency*, or rather some *extrinsick Testimony* of that Estimation: But Wisdom is a real Excellency, which gives an *intrinsick Worth* and Value to the Mind of Man, and therefore is much to be preferr'd before that Honour which stands in some outward acknowledgement. What's a *Gilded Title* to a Noble Mind, or a little *popular Air*, to that Excellency of Spirit, which renders a man usefull for the Publick?

But if any are delighted with *the shine of Gold*, let them possess themselves of that bright-fac'd Mettal, and then they may please themselves as much as they will with its shining lustre. Do ye delight in Honour? seek for Wisdom, and Honour will not fail to attend you: *Exalt Her, and she shall promote thee; She shall bring thee to Honour, when thou dost embrace her*, &c.

Thus ye see the Excellency of Wisdom to be such, as that it may justly challenge the precedency of Riches, and Power, and Honour, which are the most *vaunted advantages*, that I may not say, *Vanities* of the world. And so you

you have seen wherein that Excellency of Wisdom lies, which justly denominates her *the Principal thing*: I come now to prove,

III. That this Excellency is attainable, and to show you by what means you may attain it.

The *Throne of Wisdom* is on High, and this World may seem to be left as the *Stage* on which *Folly* is come to act her part: Wisdom is so great an Excellency, that it may well be question'd whether it can be found on Earth: Yet certainly this Excellency is attainable. If we be but serious and constant in our Endeavours, we may come to have our Souls adorn'd with the Lights and crown'd with the Glories of Wisdom. For,

1. 'Tis not sure in vain, that the Wise Man doth here commend Wisdom to us, and exhort us to the most earnest Endeavours to acquire it: *Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get Wisdom, and with all thy getting get Understanding.* God is not wont to delude men, in commanding them to seek that, which he is resolv'd he will deny, or knows they cannot attain. This Excellency Wisdom is then certainly attainable.

2. God has assign'd unto Men that Work in the World, which cannot possibly be done without Wisdom; and yet if it be not done, he has subjected them to an inevitable Necessity of bearing his Wrath, and being eternally miserable. Wisdom is the * first Principle of Religion and Piety, whereby Man gives unto God *the Glory due unto his Name.* ‖ This is his great

* Psalm 111. 10. Pro. 1. 7. and 9. 10.
‖ Psalm 29. 2.

Work in this world. And he that does not thus honour God on Earth, must expect no Glory nor Happiness in Heaven: What then remains, but that he must bear his own Guilt, and God's Wrath in Hell? Now if Wisdom was not attainable that this work might be done, this would be nothing else but a cruel design of the Eternal destruction of all Mankind, which is utterly inconsistent with the Divine Philanthropy, the essential Goodness of God, and his unspeakable Love to Man: And therefore true Wisdom is certainly attainable.

3. God hath given to Man a Rational Soul, furnished with excellent Powers or Faculties, whereby it's capable of the most Noble Endowments, and agreeable Actions, as a Power of discerning betwixt Good and Evil; *the Understanding:* and a Power of choosing the Good, and refusing the Evil; *the Will.* How far these Faculties are impeded by *the depravation of Nature*, and again relieved by *the aids of Grace*, I shall not now discourse. Certain it is, To know and discern is essential to the Understanding: to choose or refuse is essential to the Will. Hereby God hath given to Man an immediate capacity of Wisdom, which stands in the knowledge of excellent things, the proposal of excellent ends, and the Choice and Use of the most proper means for the attainment of those ends. He that lives in the Use of his Reason, in the exercise of these Noble Powers of his Soul, is, in some degree, Wise. He that applyes his Understanding to the Knowledge of that which God reveals

reveals to be good for Man, and imployes all his Powers in the diligent and conſtant proſecution of it, hath attain'd to true Wiſdom. This Method is ſo Natural, this Motion is ſo agreeable, that it cannot but plainly appear, that this Excellency, this rare Endowment of the Mind of Man, Wiſdom and Underſtanding is attainable.

Neither need I inſiſt on the Means, by which it may be attain'd, ſeeing that has already been declar'd in ſome meaſure in the forementioned Proofs and Inſtances of its attainableneſs: I ſhall only add, True Wiſdom may be attain'd by the Means:

1. *A due Government of a Man's ſelf.* He that would attain Wiſdom, muſt not permit an Ataxy in his own Soul: He muſt not ſuffer the Inferiour Powers thereof to Uſurp an Empire and Regency over the Superiour. He muſt carefully maintain the Right and Power of Reaſon in the Government of the Appetite and Paſſions. The ſenſitive Powers muſt be ſtrictly held in ſubjection to the Rational: Keep *Reaſon in her Throne*, and She will ſoon be inur'd to the Government of all the motions of the Soul, the actions of the Life, according to the *Rules of Wiſdom.*

2. *A ſerious* || *conſideration of a Mans State.* || Deut. 32. 29. There's an Eternal State of Happineſs or Miſery remains for every Man after death, according to his demeanour in this Life. The Wicked ſhall be tormented in * *Eternal Fire:* the Righteous ſhall || *ſhine as the Sun*, in the ſplendours * Mat. 25. ult. || Mat. 13. 43. of

of a superexcellent Glory, which shall never suffer the least Eclipse. Now a Holy and Virtuous Life is the Way and Means to this State of Excellent Glory. The lively consideration hereof must needs be of mighty Power and Influence to incline a man to the choice and use of these Means, in order to so excellent an end: And herein lies Man's true Wisdom.

3. *A diligent study of the Holy Scriptures*; Herein are contain'd *the Oracles of God*, wherein his hidden Wisdom is reveal'd to Men. The Holy Bible is *the Book of Wisdom.* Of this blessed Book may be truly said, that which (not without great vanity) was inscribed upon the Tomb of *Pherecydes* the *Syrian*; * *Here lies Wisdom in its highest Perfection.* That Wisdom which shineth in its highest Glory, amongst Angels in Heaven, here discloseth it self in its amiable and most attractive Beauties to men on Earth. By Meditation on God's Testimonies Holy *David* became || *wiser than his Enemies, wiser than the Ancients, wiser than his Teachers,* whose Office it was to teach him Wisdom: *The Holy Scriptures are able to make a man wise to Salvation:* * Herein God hath set before us, and proposed unto us those things, in the Knowledge and Practise whereof stands that True Wisdom, which is Man's greatest Excellency and Glory. The Holy Gospel is the manifestation of *the Wisdom of God in a Mystery, even the hidden Wisdom, which God Ordain'd before the World unto our Glory.* || The wisest men that ever were in the world, who were

* Τῆς σοφίας ὃν ἐμοὶ τίθ, Laert.

|| Ps. 119. 98, 99, 100.

* 2 Tim. 3. 15.

|| 1 Cor. 2. 7.

were not immediately inſpired by God, ow'd their Excellent Wiſdom to the ſtudy of his Holy Word. That great *Oracle of Wiſdom*, and State-Politie, the Lord *Verulam*, confeſt he ow'd his Wiſdom to the *Works of Solomon*, particularly the Book of the *Proverbs*. The Holy Scriptures are that *Great Light*, which God hath ſet up and appointed to give the Light of Wiſdom to the Rational World.

And thus you ſee by what Means this Excellency, that ſo ennobles the mind of Man, may be attain'd.

Now me thinks every one of you ſhould be inflam'd with a Generous Deſire of ſo great an Excellency, and ſhould reſolve to be diligent and ſerious in your endeavours for the attainment of it. It's an Argument of a baſe and mean Spirit to reſt in an inglorious ſloth, when a man is call'd to an Honourable Imployment. Behold, here's a Noble Deſign, a Work worthy to engage all your Powers, though ye were the greateſt Princes on Earth, *the Acquiſition of Wiſdom.* Wiſdom is the greateſt Excellency and Adornment of the Soul of Man, and renders him amiable and illuſtrious in the ſight of God. Wiſdom more adorns a King than His Royal Diadem, and redeems the meaneſt man from an unregarded Obſcurity, and renders him truly Excellent and Honourable. A wiſe Man, though in never ſo poor and mean Eſtate, is *a bright Star*, incircled with his own Rayes of Glory, and need not envy the proudeſt Princes their Secular Greatneſs and Honour.

There

There are many things Excellent, Great, Glorious in the worlds eye, which men are wont to purſue with great earneſtneſs, and would account themſelves very happy in the acquiſition and attainment of them: But, *Wiſdom is the principal thing; therefore get Wiſdom,* &c. *Exalt her, and ſhe ſhall promote thee,* &c.

Such is the Excellency and deſirableneſs of Wiſdome; and therefore, 1. *Get Wiſdome:* 2. *Uſe Wiſdom:* and 3. *Let your Wiſdom be accompanied with thoſe Virtues and Graces, which may demonſtrate its Excellency and Glory.*

1. Get Wiſdom; why ſhould you take up with any other acquiſition, when you are capable of ſo great an Excellency? What is it in the world on which men put the greateſt value? Silver, Gold, Gems? Know, Wiſdom is more excellent and deſirable: *It cannot be gotten for Gold, neither ſhall Silver be weighed for the price thereof: It cannot be valued with the Gold of Ophir, with the precious Onyx or the Saphire: The Gold and Cryſtal cannot equal it; and the exchange of it ſhall not be for Jewels of fine Gold. No mention ſhall be made of Coral or of Pearls; for the price of Wiſdom is above Rubies: The Topaz of Æthiopia ſhall not equal it, neither ſhall it be valued with pure Gold.** The Gold of *Ophir*, the *Topaz* of *Æthiopia*, the precious *Onyx* and the *Saphire*, the *Cryſtal* and the *Coral* are not worthy to be compar'd to Wiſdom. Did men but know the worth of Wiſdom, the fineſt Gold, the faireſt Pearls,

* Job 28. 15—19.

Pearls, the richest Rubies, would find but small regard. Could the Excellency and Beauty of Wisdom be presented to the eye of man, the finest Gold would cease to shine, the fairest Pearls would soon grow pale, and the richest Rubies would blush for shame, as wholly vanquish'd by so rare a Virtue, and render'd of little or no value.

Wisdom is the Excellency of the most Noble Beings; it's the Praise of Men, the Perfection of Angels, the Glory of God: The Sun is the Glory of the world, Light of the Sun: God is the Glory of all Beings, Wisdom is the Glory of God. Now how great an Honour is it for a Mortal Man to be * *like to the most High God*, in that Excellency, which is his Glory! To glitter in Gold is accounted a great Glory; but it's a far greater, to be an Earthly God, in the Excellency of Wisdom: *Get Wisdom therefore, and with all your getting get Understanding.* For,

* Σοφία ἐστὶν ὁμοίωσις πρὸς τὸ θεῖον. *Alcin.* c. 2. Θεοειδεῖς ἀπεργάζεται ἡ φρόνησις. *Famb.*

1. Wisdom will give the greatest Excellency to your Persons: 'Tis Wisdom that *makes a Mans face to shine*: || For it impresses upon him *a Ray of the Glory of God*: * *Wise men on Earth are like the stars in Heaven*, say the Hebrew Doctors. Certainly, *Wisdom excells Folly, as far as Light excells Darkness.* * There's not more difference betwixt a Man and a Beast, than betwixt a Wise Man and a Fool. Wisdom will crown you with a singular Glory; 'twill make you as *Princes* amongst the People, as *Angels* amongst men.

|| Eccl. 8. 1.

* דומים החכמים בארץ למורות בשמים

* Eccl. 2. 13.

2. 'Twill make you beneficial to others: 'Tis the Glory of Man to be the Means of Good to many: 'Twas the Wisdom of *Joseph*, which preferr'd him to that great Honour in *Ægypt*, which gave him a mighty Capacity of doing Good; and so he became the Means of sustaining his Fathers Family, yea, the whole Land of *Ægypt*, and all the Neighbouring Countries in the years of Famine. By Wisdom ye may not only promote the *Welfare of your own Country*, but also contribute to *the Safety, Peace and Honour of the whole Kingdom*. 'Tis Wisdom will make you living Images of the great God, and mighty Instruments of Good to men.

3. 'Twill make you truly Happy and Honourable; Happy in the Favour of God, Honourable in the Esteem of Men. True Wisdom is alwayes attended with a train of Excellent Virtues, and it intitles men to the highest Honours, to Immortal Glories in the Kingdom of God. The Glory of Wisdom out-lasts mens Life, and shall have a Resurrection with their Bodies from the Grave: For when the Day is come, that the Dead shall rise from the Dust, then shall *they that be Wise shine as the brightness of the Firmament*; ‖ in the lustre of a superexcellent Glory, in the Kingdom of God: *Happy then is the Man that findeth Wisdom, and the man that getteth Understanding: For length of dayes is in her right hand, and in her left hand Riches and Honour*, *. Glory is the inheritance of Wisdom: For *the wise shall inherit Glory*; *when shame shall be the promotion*

‖ Dan. 12. 3.

* Prov. 3. 13, 16.

of

of Fools. || *Get Wiſdom then, and with all your getting get Underſtanding. Exalt Her, and She ſhall promote thee; She ſhall bring thee to Honour, when thou doſt embrace Her: She ſhall give to thine Head an Ornament of Grace, a Crown of Glory ſhall She deliver to thee.* || Prov. 3. ult.

Be ſenſible of your *want of Wiſdom.* It's not to be imagin'd, that he ſhould earneſtly endeavour to get Wiſdom, who has an Opinion that he is already Wiſe: *Be not wiſe therefore in your own conceits:* || *Let no man deceive himſelf: If any man among you ſeem to be wiſe in this world,* ('tis the Apoſtles Counſel) *let him become a Fool that he may be wiſe.* * For he that thinks himſelf ſufficiently Wiſe, is certainly a Fool: whereas he, who being ſenſible of his Folly, ſeeks after Wiſdom, begins to be Wiſe. || Rom. 12. 16. * 1 Cor. 3. 18.

Seek then after Wiſdom as the Principal Excellency and ennoblement of your Nature: and that ye may attain it,

1. Converſe with the Wiſe: For *he that walketh with wiſe men ſhall be wiſe; but a companion of Fools ſhall be deſtroy'd:* * This world is *the Temple of God:* Wiſe Men are *Lamps*, which God hath lighted up therein. One Lamp may be lighted from another. From them ye may derive that Light of Wiſdom, which will make you to ſhine in the eyes of God and Men: But know *the truly virtuous are the only Wiſe.* The Light of Wiſdom ſhines in a Holy Life, as a bright ſtar in a ſerene skie. Chooſe then Holy and Good Men for your * Pro. 13. 20.

intimate Companions, that through the Light and influence of their Communications and Example, you may learn Wiſdom by *a living Law.* Thus Holy *David, I am a Companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy Precepts.* || Theſe are as *God's Myſtick Seals*, by which he impreſſes Wiſdom on the minds of men.

|| Pſalm 119. 63.

2. Ask Wiſdom of God: *For the LORD giveth Wiſdom, out of his mouth cometh Knowledge and Underſtanding.** God is the Fountain of Wiſdom, being infinitely, eſſentially wiſe. Angels excel in Wiſdom: theſe bright Lamps which burn before the Throne of God, were lighted up by his Glorious Beams. To whom then ſhould Man go, who wants and deſires Wiſdom, but to the All-wiſe God? 'Tis He that hath ſaid, *Ask, and it ſhall be given you.** Did the pooreſt man preſent know where he might have Gold for asking, he would ſoon out-ſhine the Rich, and diſdain to fill his Treaſury with any baſer Metal: But he that asks Gold of the Rich, ſhall but be derided for the inſolency of his requeſt. But, *If any of you lack Wiſdom* (which is better than Gold) *let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it ſhall be given him.* || Thus did *King Solomon* become the wiſeſt man in the World.

* Prov. 2. 6.

* Matt. 7. 7. Luk. 11. 9.

|| Jam. 1. 5.

3. Engage your ſelves with all ſeriouſneſs in the exerciſe of a ſolid Piety, and the Virtues of a Holy Life: For, *The Fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wiſdom: A good Underſtanding*

have

have all they that do his Commandments. * Live not then at random; but make an Election upon a due deliberation of that course of Life, which you apprehend to be most excellent and agreeable to the Divine Will, and most conducible to your future good, your eternal happiness: Bind your self with the firmest Resolutions, notwithstanding all difficulties and discouragements, to persist in this way, till you attain your end. When you are assaulted with Temptations, remember then not to act according to your present inclinations, but according to that Election you have made, those resolutions which you have fixed in your soul, upon a mature deliberation: This is your highest Wisdom, to act according to the Rules of Virtue, with an unshaken constancy, till you shall receive a Crown of Glory.

* Psalm III. 10.

Thus I have shew'd you the way and means whereby ye must get Wisdom. Now,

II. Learn to use Wisdom: Let Wisdom be your Guide in all your Affairs, and Understanding your directress in all your undertakings: Be diligent, serious and constant in doing those things wherein true Wisdom doth consist. Assemble all the Powers of your Soul for this purpose. The Sun incessantly moves in the Heavens, and as incessantly shines on the Earth; so do ye in the Lights of Wisdom, till ye shall be incircled with Rays of Glory in the presence of God. Enter then into *the paths of Virtue*, that ye may shine in *the Lights of Wisdom*. Desist from Sin, as the greatest Folly; believe in

Christ,

Christ, obey his Gospel, and submit to his Government, that ye may secure the salvation of your Souls, which is your highest Wisdom.

Let your Wisdom disclose it self in your 1. *Piety towards God*; 2. *Loyalty to the King*; and 3. *Love and Charity to one another*: I shall propose these Duties to you, only as proofs of the Wisdom, the proper acts and indications of this excellent Virtue.

1. Let your Wisdom shine in your Piety towards God: True Wisdom comes from God, and discloses its Excellency and Divine Original by those Acts of Religion and Piety, by which Man makes the nearest approaches to God. Religion, in its *Rise*, is Mans Return to God; in its *Progress*, his Honouring of God by acts of Devotion, and the Virtues of a Holy Life; in its *End*, his Union with God, and fruition of him as the chiefest Good, and his highest happiness for ever.

Now if Religion and Piety, which comprehends all the Virtues and Duties of a good Life, be the proper argument and evidence of True Wisdom, certainly *Atheism and Irreligion, debauchery and sin* are undeniable evidences of the want of this excellency. Swearing, Lying, Cursing, Drinking to excess, Whoredom and Uncleanness, Cheating and Over-reaching for gain, are visible *badges of folly, and marks of madness* upon men. For is it not desperate folly and madness in a Mortal Man, to make Almighty God his Enemy, by slighting his Authority, breaking his Laws, and despising his Government?

ment? Is it not Folly and Madness in men, to provoke Him to wrath by their sins, in whose Favour lies all their Felicity? Is it not Folly and Madness in Men, made after the Image of God, for a little fordid gain, or filthy pleasure of Sin, to cast away all possible hopes of future happiness in Heaven?

Take heed then, ye that would be accounted *Sons of Wisdom*, that ye be not justly charged with Folly. Let not an Oath, a Curse, or any corrupt Communication be heard to come out of your mouths; drink not to excess, nor provoke any other to drink to your measure. Let not your Meeting this Day be *a Feast of Fools*. If any man swear an Oath, let him pay for his folly, and bear his own shame, while ye manifest your Wisdom, in drawing from the *mire and filth of your Country* (the swaggering, swearing debauchee is no better) some profit for the relief of the Poor.

2. Shew your selves wise men by your Loyalty to your King. Law and Government is the greatest security we have under Heaven for our Lives and Liberties, our Religion and Property, and whatsoever is or ought to be dear unto us. Take away the *fence of Law*, break down *the Wall of Government*, and all is instantly laid open and common. The strong will oppress the weak, the Poor will prey upon the Rich, and the Lives of the Innocent will be in the hands of the Cruel. *A fruitful Land* will soon become *a barren Wilderness*. Cities and Dwelling-houses would be turn'd into

into Dens of Bruit-beasts, and wild Salvages in the shapes of men. Loose but the Bonds of Government, and all things would instantly run into Confusion, and men would still prey upon one another, till they became all a prey to a Foreign Foe, all inslaved to a Foreign Yoke. To prevent so great mischiefs, it's the Wisdom of every man to contribute what he can to the Conservation of the Law and Government under which he lives, in its full Strength and Beauty. Now the *Loyalty and Obedience* of the Subjects to their Soveraign, gives the greatest strength to the Law, and Beauty to the Government.

He that breaks a Law opens a Gap in the Fence, and he that despiseth Authority, exposes the Government to Contempt. When a Multitude, *in pursuit of some particular Advantage, or for the redress of some particular Grievance*, combines together to over-bear the Law, and subvert the Government of a Kingdom, they act the greatest folly imaginable, by destroying the best security they have for all they enjoy. They do but try their Forces to sink the Ship wherein they sail; to pull down the House in which they dwell; to overthrow the Stage on which they stand, to their inevitable Ruine.

The Sovereign Power is *the Soul of the Law and Government*: He that weakens this Power, goes about to destroy the Law, to subvert the Government: But Loyalty and Obedience to the Sovereign, who governs his Subjects by Good

Good Laws, preſerves the Law in its full Force, and the Government in its Luſtre and Glory. Now this is your greateſt ſecurity for your deareſt intereſts, and will be a proof of your Wiſdom, and render you the Worthies of your Countrey.

3. Demonſtrate your Wiſdom by your Love and Charity to one another. Union is a work of Wiſdom, as mightily conducing to the greater good of the parts united. Now Brotherly Love is the beautiful band of Union: *Behold how good, and how pleaſant it is for Brethren* (of the ſame Countrey, of the ſame City, of the ſame Church) *to dwell together in Unity.* ‖ Unity is the Beauty and Strength of a Society, its Safety and Glory. The Branch by its Union with the Tree, the Stone with the Building, a Member with the Body, ſecures it ſelf and the Body, the Building, the Tree: but when this Union is diſſolv'd, the part, if not the whole, is ſoon deſtroy'd. 'Tis then your Wiſdom to maintain that Union by Brotherly Love, which is ſo conducible to your mutual Good. This will be your Strength and Beauty, your Excellency and Honour. The Conſervation and Improvement hereof for its proper ends, will be your Wiſdom, as Men, and as Chriſtians, your Crown and Glory.

‖ Pſ. 133. 1.

But then *to your Brotherly Kindneſs add Charity*; * in the Relief of thoſe that are in Diſtreſs, in the Redemption of your poor Brethren from the Ignominy, Obſcurity and Miſery of an indigent Condition. This will be a

* 2 Pet. 1. 7.

singular Proof of your Wisdom, as well as a visible mark of your Christianity. 'Twill be your Wisdom in dayes of Danger, to secure your Estates; and nothing can be so safe as that which (by Acts of Charity) *is laid up in Heaven.* ‖ It's certainly an Act of great Wisdom in a man, to improve his Temporal Estate to the best advantage. And this improvement is the best made, this advantage is best secur'd by the Offices of Charity. For by doing Good to others, a man treasures up Glory to himself. For though the Poor may seem a barren soil, he that sows this *precious Seed*, shall reap Honour on Earth, and rewards in Heaven. Divine Charity is the only Excellent *Chymistry*; it turns even Dross into Gold. Hereby you may commute your Temporal Riches for Eternal Treasures. 'Tis the Grain not stor'd up in the Garner, but sown in the Fields, that yields the plentiful encrease.

‖ Mat. 6. 20.

If God then by his Blessing hath given you a Temporal Estate, it's your Wisdom to imploy some part thereof *in Works of Charity*, as the best improvement for an Eternal Advantage. They who most abound with worldly Goods, are but *Stewards of Gods Blessings*, and 'tis their Wisdom to imploy them according to his Will. This is the Proof of their Fidelity, whereupon they may expect God's Acceptance and a great reward.

That Advantage is most to be valued, which is of greatest extent and longest duration. Such is the advantage which may be acquir'd by the Offices

Offices of Charity. For hereby many persons may be rais'd from an unprofitable sloth and deep poverty, to a happy Capacity of doing good to others; and then will the Glory of all their good deeds redound to you. So may ye do good after this Life, and bring Glory to God, when ye shall sleep in your *Beds of Honour*; such are the Graves of good men, who having finish'd their course of Virtue, *lie down in Glory*, and rest in the hope of a happy Resurrection to the Glorious Joys of an endless Life.

'Tis certainly a commendable Act of Charity, to take Children out of poor Families, and train them up in honest Trades and Callings, whereby they may become serviceable to the Publick Good. [*You may here behold this day some Instances of the Fruits of this Charity* *.] From these *neglected Quarries*, are those stones sometimes taken, which are the *Strength and Beauty of the Building*; the stately Pinnacles and Top-stones thereof.

* Above 60 Youths put out Apprentices in *London* by the Charities of this Aniversary Feast.

Wisdom shines in her brightest splendour in the Works of Charity, which are the *paths to Honour*. Count it your Glory then to do Good; to be Beneficial to your poor Brethren. *Hide not your selves from your own flesh* ||. Nothing is more Divine, than to do Good *. *It's a more blessed thing to give, than to receive* ||. *Honour God then with your substance* *, and relieve the Poor with some part of your Estate: So shall the Poor at once lift up their eyes upon you, and their hands to Heaven and bless you,

|| Isa. 58. 7.

* Τὸ δ' ποιεῖν, ἓν τοῦτο μόνον ἔχουσι κοινὸν ἔργον ἄνθρωπος καὶ Θεός. *Synes. Ep.* 31.

|| Acts 20. 35.

* Pro. 3. 9.

you, while they behold you with Love and Veneration, as so many *Living Images* of the Eternal Divinity, the Sovereign Beauty and Goodness.

Thus I have shew'd you the right Use, and best improvement of Wisdom, for the Glory of God, and Good of Men. Now in the last place,

III. Let your Wisdom be accompani'd with those Virtues and Graces, which may with the most convincing Light and Evidence attest its Original, and justifie it to the World, to be the Off-spring of Heaven, the Daughter and the delight of God; as with *Innocency, Meekness and Humility.*

1. *Innocency.* Defraud no Man, wrong no Man; *Be wise as Serpents, but be harmless as Doves* ‖. *Wisdom buildeth her House*, but not with the Ruines of her Neighbour. He that does wrong to another, doth the greatest injury to himself: For he subjects himself to *Gods* ‖ *Wrath*, and his Estate to his * *Curse*, which may not only secretly consume his ill-gotten Goods, but also bring his whole Estate to nothing. No Man can shine in the Lights of Wisdom, but *in the State of Innocency.*

* Mar. 10. 16.

† 1 Thess. 4. 6.

* Mal. 2. 2.

2. *Meekness.* Disturb no man: Disquiet not your selves by letting loose your unruly Passions. Folly is clamorous and troublesome, but Tranquillity and Peace are the inseparable Companions of Celestial Wisdom. *The Wisdom that is from above, is, first pure, and then peaceable, gentle, and easie to be entreated* ‖.

‖ Jam. 3. 17.

Wisdom

Wiſdom is a glorious Princeſs, and She Governs her Subjects in Peace. Unruly Paſſions are not permitted to keep their Revels under her Regency. Theſe Rebels againſt Reaſon are bound in Chains, or baniſh'd from her Dominion. He is a Wiſe man that knows well how *to Govern a City*; but he more excells in Wiſdom, who knows how *to govern his own Spirit**; who upon all Provocations, can keep his Paſſions under the Rule and Regency of Reaſon. He is both a Fool, and dangerous, who upon every petty diſcontent is ready to ſet his own Houſe on fire, and does what he can to put the Neighbourhood into a flame. Where the Spirit of a Man takes fire, with *a little ſpark*, a ſlight Provocation, there is wanting *the Meekneſs of Wiſdom.** *Prov.16. 32. * Jam. 3. 13.

3. *Humility.* Deſpiſe no man: *He that deſpiſeth his Neighbour is void of Wiſdom* ||. Pride not your ſelves in the Opinion of your own Excellency: For *when pride cometh, then cometh ſhame*; *but with the lowly is Wiſdom**. Wiſdom cohabits with Humility, and therefore *let not the Wiſe Man Glory in his Wiſdom* ||, or deſpiſe his Neighbour becauſe of his Folly. Alas, O Man, *who made thee to differ**! The Great God who made you both, might have given him Wiſdom, and ſaid of thee, *Let him be a Fool.* Art thou wiſer than another? Be not lifted up: there are others wiſer than thou. If thou waſt in deed wiſer than all men, yet what was thy Wiſdom, but Folly to the moſt Wiſe God? Certainly thou canſt not deſerve ſo || Prov. 11. 12. * Prov. 11. 2. || Jer. 9. 23. * 1 Cor. 4. 7.

so much Folly in the weakest man, as the All-wise God discerns in thee. Angels excell in Wisdom, yet the most Wise God *charges them with Folly* ‖. Now dost thou not desire, that God who sees Folly in thee, may not despise thee? Then remember, that it is the Will of God, and there is the greatest Reason in the world, that thou shouldest not despise thy Brother, though thou perceivest in him a want of Wisdom. Has God given you Wisdom, conserve it in Humility, and it will be your great Glory. Angels excell in Wisdom, and they are exemplary in Humility: They veil * their faces in the presence of God, and give Glory to His Name: And it is an Act of Humility in Man, to give the Glory of all his Excellency to God: And therefore, *To God alone be ascribed,* * *Wisdom, and Strength, and Honour, and Glory, and Blessing, and Praise, both now and for evermore.* Amen.

‖ Job 4. 18.

* Isa. 6. 2, 3.

* Rev. 7. 12.

FINIS.

Coronis.

THe *SERMON* ended, the *FEAST* begins. Herein the *Example* is added to the *Rule*: The *DOCTRINE* delivered, presently (in its *Warmth and Vigour*) issues into *PRACTICE*. *Brotherly Love* is expreſt by *Feasting together*, and then in the Cloſe, *a Liberal Contribution* is made for the *Offices of Charity*. And thus *RELIGION*, attended with *BROTHERLY LOVE* and *CHARITY*, (the principal *Graces of Chriſtians*, and viſible *Glories of Chriſtianity*) appears in its *Beauty and Luſtre*, in theſe *LOVE-FEASTS* of the *Natives* of our *Countrey*. This was all prudently managed, with *Good Order*, *Civility and Sobriety*, by the *STEWARDS of the Feaſt*, for this preſent Year, MDCLXXV, whoſe *Names* (that the Reader may know to whom the foregoing *SERMON*, preach'd upon their *Choice and Call*, is owing) are here expreſt;

Mr *THOMAS HOLLIER*, Mr *THO. DAFFORNE*,
Mr *JOSEPH COLINGE*, Mr *JOHN BOND*,
Mr *WILLIAM SAVAGE*, Mr *THOMAS GIBBS*,
Mr *JOHN SAPCOT*, Mr *SAMUEL BARON*.

The *Feast* ended, *Stewards* for the following Year are chosen, by setting of *Garlands of Laurel* upon their Heads, with the *Sound of Musick*, and the *Plaudits of the People*. Herein there is a little, but lively *Representation* of that *Honour and Happiness*, which is reserved in *Heaven*, for those Persons, who live in the *Exercise of Religion*, *Brotherly Love*, *and Charity*, here upon Earth. For at the *end of their Life* (which upon the Account of the *Peace and Joy* of a good Conscience, will be but as the *Close of a Festival*) they shall be *Crown'd with Glory*, and with joyful *Harmonies and Hallelujah's* receiv'd, with the *Applauses of* ANGELS, into the *Society of the* BLESSED, and so shall live in the VISION *and* FRUITION of the *Most High* GOD, the *chiefest* GOOD, with Fulness of *Satisfaction*, and Everlasting *Delight*. AMEN.

HALLELUJAH.

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